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ABSTRACT

An instructional module designed to help prepare college-level teaching assistants (TAs) for their duties in second language instruction is presented. The module's focus is on the teaching of reading skills and strategies at the beginning and intermediate levels of language instruction. It first looks at arguments in favor of incorporating reading in the communicative language class and basic assumptions about the nature of reading and how they are reflected in classroom practice, and proposes a new second-language reading pedagogy that builds on what has been learned recently about language, language learning, and first and second language reading. Specific methods for approaching a text at both the comprehension and production stages of language learning are then discussed, and the use of learning and reading strategies is explored. Additional sections outline criteria for selecting reading texts and ascertaining students' reading interests. Contains seven annotated references. (MSE)

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Reading in the Beginning and Intermediate College Foreign Language Class

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Georgetown University

one of a series of modules for the

Professional Preparation of Teaching Assistants in Foreign Languages

Grace Stovall Burkart, Editor
Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, DC

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Reading in the Beginning and Intermediate College Foreign Language Class[1]

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[1]This unit takes the theoretical approach detailed in *Reading for Meaning* (Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes, 1991). The tables (with the exception of Tables 1, 9, and 11) are based on materials from that publication, particularly pp. 24, 77-78, 137-139, 160-162, and 206-207. Table 9 reflects Kramsch's recommendations in "Literary Texts in the Classroom" (1985). Table 11 presents workshop materials created by June K. Phillips (1985).

Introduction and Background on Reading in Foreign Language Instruction

Among the four major forms of language use (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) reading has over the years had a steady presence in American collegiate second/foreign learning and teaching. Learning a second language, even a modern foreign language and not only the "dead" classical languages, has not so much been seen as a means for interacting directly with the users of the other language but as a way to access, through the medium of the language, certain "goods" which individuals and entire cultures had produced over time and which were deemed to be educationally valuable. Even when learners' speaking ability was the instructional entrée, the long-term goal was for students to be able to access, analyze, and interpret texts in the second language, most specifically literary texts.

Today we may consider such a focus narrow and outdated, too bookish and elitist, and remote from "real" and "normal" use of language, which we generally equate with interactive speaking. However, reading should not merely be allowed to maintain its traditional presence; rather, it should play an explicit and encompassing role in the communicative classroom. This is so since there is good evidence that, far from being contradictory to such an orientation, reading in fact significantly enhances the likelihood that adult learners will be able to attain the complex goals of communicative instruction: useable levels of language *in all modalities*.

Arguments in favor of incorporating reading

As we spell out this explicit role for reading in the communicative class it is appropriate to recall long-standing arguments in favor of reading, many of which continue to be valid.

- Few second language learners are likely to use their abilities in the second language by interacting directly with speakers of other languages. By comparison, learners may well encounter second language texts, in their personal as well as their professional lives, a scenario that justifies an emphasis on written language and specifically reading.

- In the American educational system foreign languages are generally not taught for long sequences, neither at the high school nor at the college level. Speaking a foreign language competently requires a well articulated, multiyear curriculum. By contrast, reading ability can be brought to usable and useful levels in a considerably shorter period of time.

- Having acquired basic reading strategies, second language learners can further develop their reading ability on their own, without an instructor, and on their own time—all they need to do is read! This common-sense statement is not nearly as pedagogically unenlightened as it might first appear: in fact, it accords with some of

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the best research, not to mention experiential evidence, we have with regard to reading.

- In contrast with the fragility of speaking, reading ability is considerably more robust. Once a certain facility has been attained, it can be recovered relatively easily, a strong justification for investing time in the teaching of reading.

- Finally, a focus on texts, particularly literary texts, is in the best tradition of what Western societies consider to be definitional for the educated person. Literate societies critically depend on and reward those who are able to access the knowledge and wisdom of the culture, gaining from the past, and carrying it forward in light of their own experiences.

Assumptions about the nature of reading and their reflection in classroom practices

Despite these strong arguments in favor of reading, the profession has yet to develop a coherent and comprehensive pedagogy of second language reading. It did not do so at a time when literature courses dominated the upper-level curriculum, and probably could not do so in the fifties and sixties during the heyday of audiolingualism with its overwhelming interest in speaking. Today, when a communicative or proficiency orientation attempts to regain a balance among the modalities, interest in reading is again on the rise. Many second language textbooks now include reading selections, with nearly ubiquitous previewing, skimming, and scanning exercises as pedagogical staples. However well intentioned these practices may be, they can be quite narrowly conceived, at times becoming prescriptive "techniques" and routines that remain at the surface level. This is so since key assumptions about reading that are increasingly being questioned in research have yet to be dislodged from our classroom practice. Among these are:

(1) second language reading does not differ in critical ways from first language reading;
(2) second language reading ability, in its most important qualities, comes about through transfer, in some unspecified fashion, from the first to the second language;
(3) learners' limitations in second language reading can be attended to by reviewing the basic building blocks of the form side of language, in terms of morphology and syntax and by learning new vocabulary.

In the meantime, both second language teachers and readers have devised elaborate coping strategies for dealing with complex and unfamiliar grammatical constructions or vocabulary: they use a range of support materials (e.g., grammar reviews, textbooks, study guides, English translations, and dictionaries of various quality); they assign and read originally short, shortened, or edited texts (i.e., versions that were "cleaned-up" to account for the multiple limitations of the second language learner), rather than long and authentic texts; they work with glossaries and interlinear translations; and, ultimately, find refuge in the highly predictable routine of questions at the end of a text, though these rarely get at its deeper meanings. More importantly, in the absence of serious challenges to the above

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beliefs, reading is relegated to both luxury and simple tool status within the larger context of second language acquisition, as amply demonstrated by the following positions.

Reading is a support skill for other instructional concerns or goals.

Instead of being valued on its own merits, reading is practiced as a way of supporting a wide range of goals. Among these are:

- *Understanding the other culture*. Enhancing students' cultural understanding occurs primarily through literary texts, which are seen as the best written embodiment of the other culture.

- *Accessing information in a variety of disciplines or topical areas*. Information in support of academic fields (general education and the disciplines) and the work world (professional or pre-professional preparation) is central. Neither second language acquisition in the comprehensive sense nor the development of second language reading abilities are of concern.

- *Reviewing all kinds of linguistic material*. In this use of reading, second language learning seems very much in the forefront. However, in reality "reading" pertains primarily to previously introduced linguistic materials, written or oral, authentic or instructional, or is essentially supplemental. The fact that readings typically occur at the end of an instructional unit shows this optional status for the activity of reading.

- *Improving pronunciation*. A strong concern for appropriate phonetic habits for second language learners takes reading as a way to improve students' pronunciation. Reading out loud, often sentence by sentence by different students, focuses on precise pronunciation of individual words, even individual sounds. Recommendations that reading be delayed or involve only thoroughly familiar, even well "mastered" materials, are the extreme case of this approach. Text comprehension is quite a secondary matter.

- *Acquiring vocabulary*. Though reading has always been assumed to enhance vocabulary acquisition, that connection is only vaguely understood and, in a way, disbelieved, as shown by the kinds of glossaries and vocabulary lists occurring before the text and our ways of subsequently assessing vocabulary gains.

In terms of learner cognitive engagement, second language reading is a passive skill.

Second language pedagogy has traditionally given prominence to the form inventory of language (grammar and vocabulary) and to an additive, linear approach to learning it. Higher performance is "more" and "better" of what learners have already "mastered;" little consideration is given to second language acquisition research findings that learners construct and reconstruct their own interlanguage systems as they acquire the second language. Text comprehension is therefore simply the sum of comprehending the individual, separate component parts of a text with their presumed unequivocal and fixed meanings. What we

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call bottom-up processing of linguistic material is the reading strategy of choice, irrespective of second language proficiency and second language reading ability—and irrespective of whether that way of reading arrives at something that actually makes sense!

Fluent second language reading is a natural by-product of fluent speaking.

Despite elaborated knowledge about characteristics of oral and written language, including quite specifically literary language, second language reading pedagogy often approaches texts as though they were the written version of spoken language and are processed like spoken language. Since most second language instruction focuses on speaking, not teaching second language reading would make sense only if oral language processing directly transfers to written language processing or the two are essentially identical, both highly dubious assumptions.

Reading ability becomes a concern only at the advanced levels.

Though readings are incorporated in the first two years of language classes, reading is not really a concern for teachers and learners until the so-called content courses at the upper levels. At that point second language curricula dramatically elevate the importance of reading, making it *the* skill advanced learners must have acquired, to a particularly high level and largely on their own.

In sum, while foreign language instruction has had a general commitment to reading as an important goal of second language learning, it has not developed an explicit and encompassing second language reading pedagogy. However, current discussions allow us to be hopeful: remaining lacunae notwithstanding, extensive theorizing has already been done, we can refer to a broad research base, and in some areas our classroom practice has advanced sufficiently to allow the foreign language profession to put forward a range of proposals for a pedagogy of second language reading.

Not surprisingly, such a new pedagogy also requires adjusting our goals for second language reading. Rather than expecting students to become fluent second language readers and to do this on their own, our goal is both more realistic and more demanding: we will support them in beginning the long journey toward acquiring multiple literacies, in various languages and within various discourse environments, for use at home and abroad.

To reach that goal, second language teachers must possess a good understanding of current issues in second language reading pedagogy and must have available to them a sufficient number of specific suggestions which enable them to gradually incorporate sensible innovations into their second language reading practices. This unit hopes to provide both resources, so that teachers can take the critical step of adjusting their pedagogy in light of their own students, their particular teaching environments, and special aspects of their programs.

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Considerations for a New Second Language Reading Pedagogy

The proposed new pedagogy for second language reading builds on a number of important developments over roughly the last twenty years. The developments pertain to our understanding of language, of language learning, particularly instructed second language learning, and of both first and second language reading.

Foundational considerations

An expanded theoretical debate about second language learning, particularly instructed second language acquisition

Collegiate second language instruction has benefitted particularly from a differentiated investigation of the learning characteristics of adults. No longer are these discussed primarily as limitations, arrived at by contrasting adult learners with child naturalistic or instructed second language learning. Instead, adult learners are also being studied in terms of important efficiencies they can bring to second language learning that allow them to be particularly successful at certain learning tasks, characteristics that should reshape instruction, with respect to goals and approaches.

A dramatic change in our understanding of human learning

Scholarship in learning now favors a cognitivist constructivist stance over a stimulus-response paradigm; this makes learners active participants in learning rather than passive respondents. Consciousness, noticing, attention, and creation become critical aspects, as contrasted with subliminal perception or rote replication. Also, learners are not isolated cognitive entities but live in a sociocultural context (i.e., the second language classroom) that critically shapes their learning.

A reconsideration of second language learning which frees it from the dominance of form

Language teaching and learning have largely been guided by a primacy of the form side of language and the demand for its accurate mastery by learners. Whether they are referred to as "grammar" or "vocabulary" or simply "accuracy," formal considerations are, indeed, important. However, it is increasingly clear that the goals of accuracy, fluency, and complexity of expression (i.e., communicative competence) are more likely to be attained if functions (meaning) and form are explicitly related to each other. Indeed, language seems learnable only when that function-form relationship is supported by a context of interaction.

Impact on the conceptualization of second language reading

These considerations have major consequences for second language reading in a classroom setting, particularly with regard to the relationship of second language proficiency to background knowledge, the use of authentic texts, and our notion of the act of reading itself.

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Second language proficiency and background knowledge

Reading can shed its long-standing preoccupation with second language proficiency and can explore the importance of first language reading ability, generally referred to as background knowledge, for second language reading comprehension. Rather than dismissing the use of authentic texts for meaningful reading in the beginning stages of second language learning, we can ask:

> How first-language literate does a second language reader have to be to make the second language knowledge work?
>
> and
>
> How much second language knowledge does a second language reader have to have in order to make the first language literacy knowledge work?

Answers are sought in three broad areas: text topic knowledge, knowledge of text type, and knowledge about the target language culture.

Text topic knowledge. Not surprisingly we find that the richer readers' topical knowledge of a text selection the less they need to draw on their second language formal knowledge. Although this compensatory function of topic knowledge has undeniable limitations, its opportunities deserve wise exploration in reading pedagogy, particularly in beginning language instruction.

For advanced learners, too, topic knowledge is of critical importance. Since subject matter knowledge generally arises from professional and academic interests, their second language reading can accomplish both goals: enhancing their topical knowledge beyond the information available in the first language and expanding their second language abilities. Given the increasing professionalization of American undergraduate education and our desire to draw more second language learners into our classrooms, it would be difficult to imagine a more powerful combination for motivating continued second language study.

Knowledge of text type. An elaborated knowledge of diverse textual conventions, exemplified in genres (e.g., narration of an event, instructions, essayistic argumentation, news reporting, short story) characterizes the literate user of a language. Such textual schemata allow readers to approach a text in a holistic fashion with what we call top-down processing strategies that are instantiated through bottom-up strategies. Reading is then not a *decoding* of fixed meanings that are presumed to reside in the various words and grammatical constructions of a text. Instead, it is the reader *encoding* meanings into forms on the basis of already existing expectations of what the text is likely to say, based on his or her global assessment of the nature of that text. From the standpoint of language processing, this is a highly efficient way of dealing with incoming data, essentially a matching of meaning-form expectations—and the more developed these are the better—with the actual text, as compared with creating meaning *de novo*.

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Knowledge of the target language culture. Like topic and text organizational knowledge, knowledge of the target language culture can compensate for limited formal knowledge. While topic knowledge is likely to be most useful for addressing vocabulary shortcomings, and text organizational schemata are particularly suited to guiding readers toward the intended structure and thrust of an argument, knowledge of the target language culture leads to consideration of motivations, implications, inferences, and significance of actions and events.

Use of authentic texts

In light of the previous considerations, a pedagogy of reading can now be advocated that does *not* defer or restrict reading of authentic texts to upper levels of instruction, when learners are presumed to have sufficiently high knowledge of the form inventory. Instead, with appropriate caution, reading can be incorporated with great success and to great advantage right from the beginning of second language teaching and learning.

Reading as a process

Perhaps the most succinct way of stating the nature of second language reading is to characterize it in terms of the *process of reading* rather than in terms of the *product of reading*, text comprehension. Table 1 lists frequently used descriptors for this understanding of reading.

Table 1 Reading Is . . .

An interactive process between the reader and the text
A creative process that balances top-down and bottom-up strategies
Assigning meaning to letters, words, phrases, paragraphs, entire texts—*though not necessarily in that order*—not a matter of "extracting sound" from print
Based on both visual and non-visual information
A psycholinguistic guessing game
The reduction of uncertainty
A problem-solving behavior
A highly individualistic activity

A developing model for the second language reading process

In their totality the above points result in a general model of second language reading as an interactive process between so-called top-down, holistic, and schema-driven processing, and bottom-up, form-driven processing. Both can be further described as text-based or reader-based. Table 2 summarizes these understandings in terms of "encoding tasks" (tasks

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1-5) that confirm expectations of major meaning patterns, and "decoding tasks" (tasks 6-8), which confirm these expectations at the level of words, phrases, and individual sentences. Both kinds of processing critically depend on readers creatively constructing meaning on the basis of the text, rather than "acquiring" pre-existing meanings.

Table 2 Reading as an Interactive Process

Top-down factors → → → Calling for encoding processes

Bottom-up factors → → → Calling for decoding processes

Top-down factors: Reader

1. Reader background (knowledge of text subject)
2. Reader perspective (knowledge of major text organizations/schemata; reading strategies)

Top-down factors: Text

3. Text schema (macropropositions → "main ideas")
4. Text structure (rhetorical organization)
5. Episodic sequence (mid-level structure)

Bottom-up factors: Text and reader

6. Illustrative detail (micropropositions)
7. Language features of the text (vocabulary, syntax, semantics)
8. Language proficiency of the reader (overall performance capability with regard to issues under point 7)

Linking second language reading and larger educational issues

Beyond its importance for articulating a comprehensive approach to second language reading, the above model has implications for the positioning of foreign language instruction in higher education, but particularly for introductory and intermediate courses. The model recognizes the critical importance of learners' first language, specifically first language literacy, a conceptualization which allows second language reading pedagogy to introduce learners right from the beginning of language teaching to second language texts. As a consequence reading, and by implication all of second language instruction, is linked to the larger world of ideas that is at the heart of the academy.

That connection enables us to address a problem that has consistently besieged second language teaching and learning in American higher education: its traditional isolation from general education issues and consequent struggle with asserting an intellectual presence for its

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work. By vitally contributing to that central concern in general education (e.g., students' ability to work with texts, in analysis and synthesis, in reading and writing), a new second language reading pedagogy bolsters the academic merit of all foreign language instruction on college campuses.

Approaching a Text

Just what might an understanding of reading as an interactive process mean as teachers and learners approach a text? We can differentiate two major phases, a comprehension phase and a production phase. Table 3 provides a first overview of the process; Tables 4 A and B indicate the kinds of tasks learners will perform; Table 5 is an extended version which gives explicit pedagogical recommendations; Table 6 presents the information in a form that can be made available to students. Other variants, each with a slightly different focus, are provided in Tables 7 and 8.

General considerations

The following understandings frame the proposed approach to second language reading:

- Teachers' and learners' reading behaviors in the classroom are guided through six stages that progress from comprehension to production; the word and phrase level links the two.

- Comprehension moves from global to specific aspects. Just how much specificity in comprehension is required or desired is a pedagogical decision on the part of the teacher. For example, it may well be sufficient to ascertain that students have grasped the major episodes of a narrative rather than every detail.

  The need for sound pedagogical decision-making with regard to levels of specificity applies particularly at the word level, traditionally an area of heavy focus. Whether an individual word needs to be "known/understood" depends on many factors, e.g., significance for the text's topic, importance for learners' meaning creation at a certain point of the text, frequency of the word, learners' proficiency level, subsequent work with the text.

- Production moves in the opposite direction, from word and phrase-level via the sentence-level to the discourse level. Given that production is significantly more demanding of the second language learner, it progresses from less to more complex structures in terms of lexicon and grammar. However, no matter what the level, students work with all language features (from individual words and phrases to

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complex sentences and paragraphs) *on the basis of their role and place within the larger meaning of the text*, an understanding that has been carefully developed in the three previous comprehension stages. By contrast, traditional reading comprehension tasks often begin by asking students to give the "meaning" of individual words or to explicate the "meaning" of an entire text, in terms of its implications, both highly complex, if not outright "non-doable" tasks from both the linguistic and the content side.

- All language classes comprise students with very different backgrounds and language profiles. As students' background knowledge changes with the text topic, they may well show different reading comprehension abilities. This is particularly true on the beginning level, where the impact of background knowledge is most noticeable.

  Along with different comprehension abilities, learners have different speaking abilities. This approach allows *all* learners to participate, those who still function at the word, phrase, and simple sentence level and those who are quite capable of producing complex sentences and entire oral paragraphs.

- This reading pedagogy continuously links reader- and text-based strategies. This ensures that second language readers continuously monitor their own expectations (e.g., those based on background, convictions, knowledge lacunae) against the kinds of inferences the text permits or justifies, in terms of the (cultural) assumptions within which it is embedded—and make appropriate adjustments once they detect discrepancies.

- With different text topics and at different stages of the second language learning process, the processing burden shifts between top-down and bottom-up factors, depending on what abilities the reader brings to the task.

- While language proficiency must always be present for comprehension to occur, it is no guarantee of comprehension. Without an adequate schema, word-level meanings and subsequent text meanings are often distorted.

- Comprehension results when the reader constructs a mental representation based on the verbal data from the text. The reader can build an appropriate representation only if an adequate schema exists already.

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Table 3 Approaching a Text: An Overview

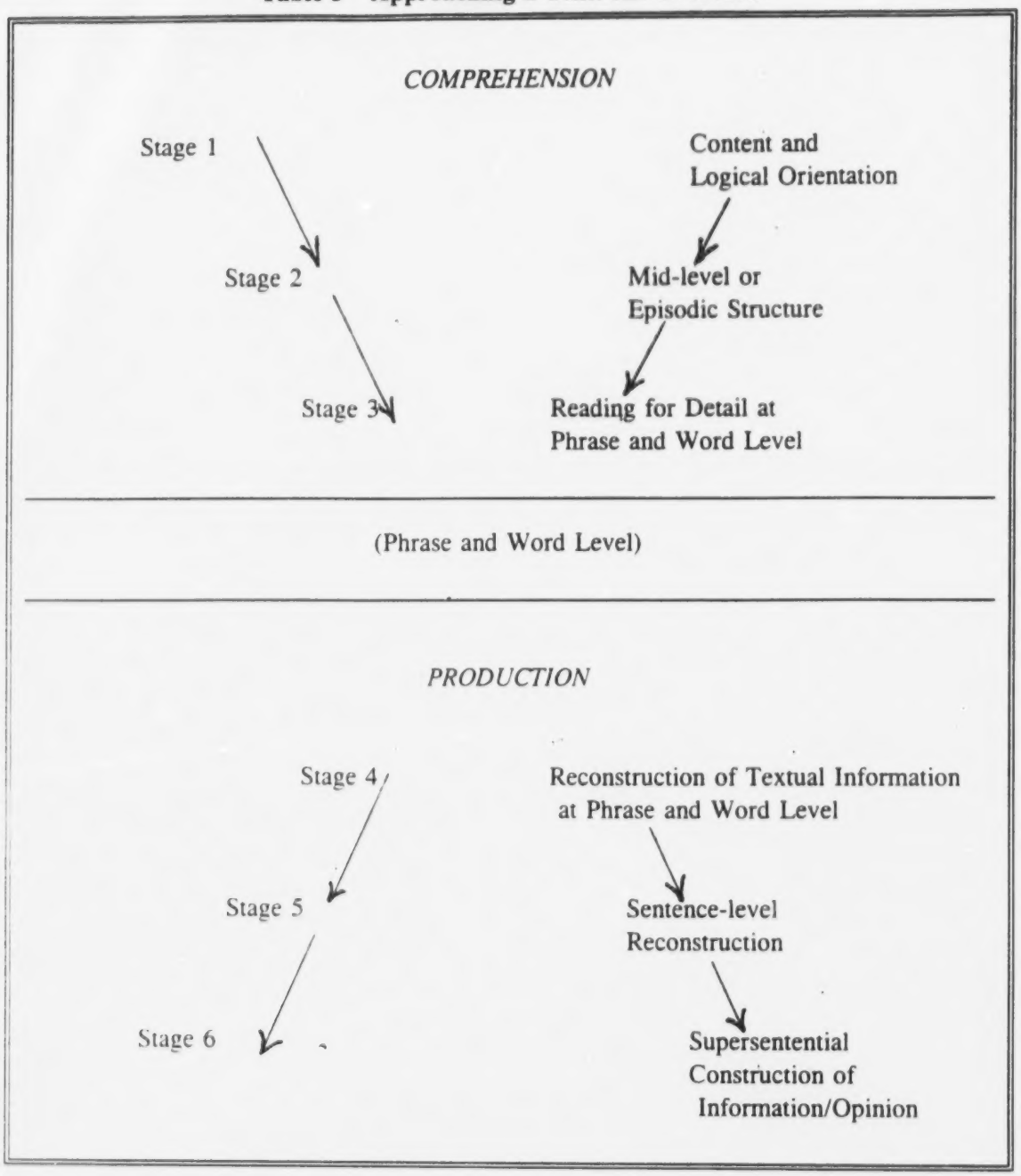

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Table 4A Approaching a Text: Comprehension Stages

Stage 1:	Students preview work to establish the content and logical orientation of the text.
Stage 2:	Students identify mid-level or episodic structure.
Stage 3:	Students read for detail—beyond gist or global comprehension.

Table 4B Approaching a Text: Production Stages

Stage 4:	Students compare word- and phrase-level reconstruction of textual information in matrices.
Stage 5:	Students reconstruct textual information at the sentence level.
Stage 6:	Readers construct their opinions about textual information beyond the simple sentence/at the discourse level.

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Table 5 Pedagogical Recommendations

The Comprehension Stages

Stage 1: Students preview work to establish the content and logical orientation of the text.

Class activity

Class reacts for five to eight minutes to a teacher-suggested topic followed by a subsequent cursory reading (skimming or scanning) of a text dealing with that topic.

Reader-based phase

Prior to looking at the text, the class has reacted to and speculated about the scope or focus of the text topic.

Text-based phase

After scanning the text, students delimit the topic of the article exclusively by means of words and phrases in initial paragraphs.

Stage 2: Students identify mid-level or episodic structure.

Class activity

Class spends three to five minutes finding shifts in topic, character, events, and setting of the story or text.

Reader-based phase

Students scan text format, semantics, and discourse markers that divide the text into subsets of the global topic.

Text-based phase

Practice in recognition of discourse markers—their function and impact on language usage in the text (e.g., changes in word order).

Stage 2 is generally superfluous with shorter texts (those with fewer than 500 words). Both types of recognition exercises focus student attention on language that connects messages in a passage.

Stage 3: Students read for detail—beyond gist or global comprehension.

Class activity

Recognition of micropropositions related to global or episode propositions.

Reader-based phase

Students scan:

- sentences for the ways they relate to the main concepts (stage 1);
- episodes of the text (stage 2).

Initially this can be a class activity.

Text-based phase

Students read silently to a predetermined point in the selection to locate two or three examples of text language representative of the logic of the text (e.g., narration, cause and effect, comparison, thesis and example) and place that information into a matrix or matrices.

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Table 5 Pedagogical Recommendations (cont.)

The Production Stages

Stage 4: Students compare word- and phrase-level reconstruction of textual information in matrices.

Class activity subsequent to reading outside of class

Students assess their matrices—preferably in the form of written précis—through class discussion, small group work, and teacher evaluation.

Reader-based phase

Students organize text phrases that convey details (micropropositions) in a way that is consistent with the textual pattern of main ideas (macropropositions) they perceive.

Text-based phase

Only lexicon from the text may be used at this stage. Students' matrices reveal only minor adjustments in text language (e.g., some changes in singular or plural form, deletion of words they judge superfluous.

Stage 5: Students reconstruct textual information at the sentence level.

Class activity based on writing done largely outside of class

Students generate sentences based on their matrices.

Reader-based phase

Students create the language of factual details in the text that relates to perceived macromessages of that text.

Text-based phase

Students expand the text phrases in their matrices into simple sentences. They modify formal properties of textual language according to the teacher's assessment of their chief deficiencies in their speaking or writing (e.g., transformations such as tense changes, negation, active to passive, singular and plural, adjective agreement).

Stage 6: Readers construct their opinions about textual information beyond the simple sentence/at the discourse level.

Class activity based on writing done in small groups or outside of class

Students generate at least four or five connected sentences based on their earlier sentence-level statements. Relevant discourse markers and their impact on formal features, such as case or word order, must be emphasized by the teacher.

Reader-based phase

Students extrapolate from the language of factual details in the text to create their own macromessages about the implications and significance of these details.

Text-based phase

Students use the text as a reference to confirm their assertions and to check formal properties of relevant language.

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Table 6 Formatting a Process Reading Assignment

Preview (identifying situation or schema of the text **before reading**)

The text deals with _____ (who and/or what)
_____ (when)
_____ (where)

in order to show
- features of stages in _____
- impact of _____ on _____.
- solutions to problems of _____.
- comparison between _____ and _____.

Identification

1. Recognition level

Where in the text do you find information about the following topics:

OR

This text is about the general topic _____.

Make a list of the subtopics and locate them by paragraph and line number in the text.

2. Organizational recall level

Group relevant words and phrases from the text under the following categories:

Example 1: historical event features of event

Example 2: when what happened

Sentence Structure (reproducing textual information at sentence level)

Example 1: Using the information in Example 1 above, write sentences which list the events and their features in chronological order. Use words like "first," "next," "shortly thereafter," "much later" as you find appropriate.

Example 2: Write sentences expressing what the person in Example 2 above should have done. Use the subjunctive and the form: WHO + WHAT // WHAT
"if - then" connectives

Connected Statements (connecting sentences on the language and information of the text)

Example 1: Write 5 sentences for or against the following statement. Use causal sentences to justify your position.

Example 2: Write a paragraph of 5-6 sentences which explains an alternative ending to the story.

[See Tables 7 and 8 for other variants, each with a slightly different focus.]

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Table 7 Text-Based Reading Tasks That Encourage Form-Based Strategies

Analyzing vocabulary in terms of form-meaning relationships

Students use various marking conventions (highlighting, underlining, circling, linking) to exemplify meaning-form relationships as they manifest themselves in vocabulary. Sample categories include:

- semantic fields (e.g., vocabulary pertaining to electing/selecting/making choices)
- derivational relationships (e.g., verb→noun; noun→adjective; verb→adjective)
- tense marking and tense alternation
- verb position in different clause types
- pro-forms (pronouns and their referents)

Noting cohesion markers

Students circle the connectors and/or visual text organizers (illustrations, format, indentations, headings, bolding, italics) to expose the structure and cohesion of the text. They note the words that suggest:

- narration (*in the beginning, thereafter, on the following day, meanwhile, finally*)
- comparison and contrast (*but, on the contrary, on the other hand, nonetheless*)
- causality (*therefore, consequently, as a result*)
- expansion of ideas (*moreover, furthermore, in effect*)
- qualifications (*yet, perhaps, to be sure*)

Textual grammar searches

Often texts make their points with particularly striking adjectives, embedded structures, unusual word order, particular use of aspect (introduction of passive voice or contrasting time frames). When students are aware that these features serve a meaning function—e.g., to make a text more upbeat, to render the text message more impersonal, to highlight the "pastness" of a particular experience—finding the forms is meaningful, too.

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Table 8 Text-Based Reading Tasks That Encourage Meaning-Based Strategies

Scanning
Students quickly search the longer text for specific information (first reading).

Highlighting
Students underline, circle, box, or highlight familiar or guessable words/expressions, then focus just on highlighting to determine the gist of the text (topic development) or a particular emphasis you as the teacher have selected.

DTR activity
Directed thinking, directed reading as a class or group activity.

Summary Construction
Students choose from one-line summaries the one that best captures paragraph 1, 2, etc. Depending on the students' level of abilities, the nature of the text, and, most importantly, the goals of this entire activity, the summary could be constructed by the teacher or the students, and could be in English or the second language.

Matrix
Sorting out key factual information. Depending on the text, this could be:

	TOPIC	COMMENT
	Who said what	... meaning what
OR		
	What happened first	... how did people react/what resulted
OR		
	Features of one item/person	... features of contrasting item/person
OR		
	Problems of X	... solutions/implications listed

Semantic Mapping
Students create trees, charts, or maps to show sequence of events, relationships of topics to subtopics, characters to features of their personality, behavior, etc.

Illustration
Students further describe in class a significant segment or event in the text

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Reading for comprehension only

The above guidelines for approaches to second language reading have purposely linked reading to the other modalities, particularly speaking and writing. However, as we know, reading comprehension does not necessarily need to make that connection. By briefly focusing on the special characteristics of reading for comprehension only, we become more aware of the unique opportunities of a second language reading pedagogy within the larger context of second language acquisition.

In terms of the demands it puts on the second language learner, reading for comprehension only has two advantageous features. First—and this is not a mere tautology—it does not require the learner to focus on *producing and creating* responses in the second language or, for that matter in the first language. Put slightly differently, initially it primarily requires meaning creation in thinking; in that sense it is akin to listening. Second, within limits it allows learners to adjust the time available for their processing, perhaps *the* critical aspect in the initial stages of learning to perform with second language material; in that sense it is akin to writing.

Taken together, these aspects strongly justify comprehension only tasks, particularly at the beginning levels of instruction. In this fashion reading will lay important ground work for second language learning in all modalities: it sets the stage for ultimately turning comprehensible input into comprehensible output.

Instructional Aspects of Second Language Reading
Learning to Read—Reading to Learn

Thus far we have focused on the process nature of reading and how classroom practices might attend to it within the major parameters of second language knowledge and general literacy or background knowledge. Another perspective on reading is in terms of the purposes it serves within the larger second language instructional context.

We can broadly state these as "learning to read" and "reading to learn." Though these goals are inseparable, they tend to receive different emphases along the acquisitional sequence, from beginning to advanced. That partially sequenced set of purposes for reading is realized with an array of teaching practices. In addition to following a progression from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," teachers can also deliberately stage either emphasis at any given point of the learners' acquisition process. The result is a rich palette of possibilities for incorporating reading at any level of second language learning, a good number of which were already stated in conjunction with the general overview of approaches to texts. What is most important is that teachers have available to them numerous and clear

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choices which allow them to take their particular teaching situation into account as they work to enhance students' second language reading proficiency.

Learning to read

Our consideration of "learning to read" has two interrelated dimensions: learning the formal features of the second language, and developing second language reading strategies. Both dimensions are, of course interrelated and both critically depend on the learners' first language literacy and background knowledge.

Learning the formal features of the second language through reading

As already demonstrated, reading of authentic texts is intended to enhance students' acquisition of the formal inventory of the second language in the three interrelated categories of vocabulary, grammar (sentence level grammar and discourse level grammar), and text structure and organization. Since these three areas have been the traditional foci for reading, we need to note how they are incorporated in this approach to second language reading.

Vocabulary. Understanding second language reading as an interaction that involves both top-down and bottom-up processing continues to acknowledge the indispensability of a rich vocabulary in the second language: we know that good word processors are also good text processors. The big difference from past practice revolves around the best ways for acquiring that crucial store of vocabulary.

Two major changes over past practice can be noted. First we are moving away from learning words as "naked" separate items to learning them "dressed" within their context of occurrence, that is, within the logic of the text where they occur. Examples for the former are alphabetical vocabulary lists, but also lists that categorize words by parts of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, prepositions). By contrast, learning vocabulary as contextually dressed uses to advantage the inherent context of a coherent text.

A second shift regarding vocabulary learning is the differentiation between "potential" and "productive" vocabulary. This distinction builds on the notion that second language learning is a dynamic and oftentimes long process, as contrasted with being thought of as an "off/on" event. While it may be difficult to define precisely what constitutes "knowing a word," the ability to process it effectively for its meaning, something that often requires creative contextual guessing, is surely at the base of that knowing. Since reading can be staged as a progression from comprehension to production tasks (see above) it is particularly advantageous for vocabulary acquisition.

Finally, the use orientation of communicative language classrooms has exposed the artificiality of the division between vocabulary and grammar. In order for a word to be

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usable and useful in expressing a certain meaning it must wear a "dress" that intricately weaves together threads of meaning and form, required as well as optional features, central as well as peripheral meanings and functions. The kind of efficient processing in all modalities which characterizes competent users presupposes rich access to what we call fixed lexical routines, or "lexical phrases." These collocations operate at the interface between vocabulary and grammar and manifest one of the key features in language use, its fixedness as well as its open-ended creativity. More than the other modalities, reading can initially raise learners' awareness of this critical aspect of language and, in conjunction with the other modalities and over time, lead to fluent and accurate language use.

Grammar. The practice of reading promotes a much deeper understanding of the workings of grammar than do morphological and syntactic rules, which are often limited to the word and simple sentence level—students' (and often teachers') notion of "grammar." Of the many possibilities two deserve to be singled out: (1) foreshadowing a feature through reading comprehension as a first stage toward its subsequent productive use; and (2) a focus on grammatical and lexical features that are unique to discourse length language as contrasted with sentence level language.

When we observe that learning involves a number of phases and stages until a feature is "known," we implicitly acknowledge learners' need for a period of "comprehensible input" before they can produce "comprehensible output." However we operationalize the notion of "comprehensible input," attention, awareness, and noticing are critical preconditions for comprehension and learning. Applying that insight to grammar we might, for example, foreshadow with a number of reiterations the formation of compound tenses in the Indo-European languages. Position requirements in main or subordinate clauses, choice of auxiliary, forms of the participle and their major patterns, the expression of modality—all can be attended to through carefully queued sorting tasks long before learners would themselves actively use such forms (for a review of possibilities, see particularly Table 6). Such attentiveness sharpens learners' ability to become aware of major meaning-form patterns, thereby significantly reducing, perhaps even eliminating big chunks of purely formal grammatical explanation. In other words, with appropriate tasks, reading is an obvious way for developing and shaping a range of favorable second language processing strategies, in comprehension and production.

Text structure and organization. By definition, reading of authentic texts makes possible a focus on discourse grammar, as contrasted with the more standard focus on sentence-level grammar. Among discourse features are an array of markers of cohesion and coherence (e.g., the special alternation of full noun and pronoun reference, or of shifting from indefinite to definite articles; the linkage between stating a topic and then commenting on it; the treatment of different tenses and aspect). Adverbial connectors, conjunctions, and

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entire families of discourse markers, such as those signaling cause and effect relationships, temporal sequencing, or comparison, reveal not only how a text is structured but carry its particular logic and provide critical information about the stance of the author or various "actors" in a story (see Table 6).

Devising and performing with reading tasks that focus on the discourse level is a crucial and intellectually deeply engaging and insightful way of expanding our view of how language works. It is difficult to imagine a better approach to developing in learners a sophisticated awareness of how language "lives" and how we "live" with and in language.

Developing second language reading strategies

The kind of noticing of discourse organizational features described above is not merely a matter of top-down or bottom-up processing in the narrow sense. At heart it targets learners' development of global meaning-making strategies for a whole range of texts. Past practice might lead us to restrict such goals to the advanced learner, not even the intermediate, and certainly not the beginning learner. However, the argument here is exactly the opposite: in terms of text comprehension no one gains more from being able to discern major organizational structures than beginning and intermediate learners. Fortunately that benefit is quite attainable, inasmuch as the discerning of textual organization is much more a matter of cognitive than of linguistic ability. In other words, second language text-based reading strategies are both teachable and eminently learnable to the extent that our learners have well developed adult literacy skills.

The benefits to be obtained with such macro-organizational knowledge are multiple. They begin with the ability to encode meaning into a text, from the macro- to the mid- and local level, making "contextual guessing" no longer the haphazard (and flawed!) enterprise that it seems to be. But the benefits of that kind of an understanding of texts go far beyond reading. For example, the connection between awareness of text organizational features and coherent writing is well established. Likewise, learners will be the more able to present a coherent oral argument, even with relatively simple language, the more aware they are of the discourse markers that written language uses for that purpose. Again, extended foreshadowing through reading is likely to be both a necessity for developing reading competence and an exciting and intellectually stimulating possibility that bridges second language and first language learning.

Reading to learn

Given the longstanding focus on using the second language to access other knowledge, reading to learn needs little justification. Of greater interest is the enlarged range of topics which we can consider appropriate for second language readers once we have scaled the "authentic-text" hurdle.

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Reading for content information

One of the important by-products of the communicative orientation is that content has gained significantly in importance as compared with formal features. As stated, in the past content, particularly subject matter content, was an issue only for the advanced learner, major and non-major alike. Now we have significantly broadened the spectrum of topics for all learners. For example, the movement to spread language across the curriculum and to connect language and content instruction focuses heavily on reading comprehension. Whether the model results in courses being taught in a second language by faculty in another discipline (e.g., economics, business, engineering, philosophy, health care) or whether an English-language course has so-called "trailer sections" added to it that allow students to read supplementary texts in their second language, content dominates and is highly varied.

In either case the kinds of strategies for "learning to read" outlined above are crucial for the success of such programs, if for no other reason than the relatively limited language proficiency which can reasonably be expected of the second language learners in the American collegiate setting. This is particularly true for the trailer sections that are often appended to general education courses in the first two years of undergraduate study. Foreign language faculty are likely to be called upon to staff these sections, a teaching assignment that can become exciting with a rich pedagogy of reading that includes activities that span the goals of learning to read and reading to learn.

Reading for cultural knowledge and awareness

In the past, cultural knowledge that second language learners should possess was often equated with what has been called "achievement" culture, that is, factual knowledge regarding the great accomplishments with which a language and culture group identifies itself particularly strongly.

More recently, "culture' has been expanded to include the culture of everyday life. As a result, the relationship of language and culture and the extent to which oral and written language build on and express these deep underlying cultural assumptions, are gradually being considered in the foreign language classroom. In other words, *how* something is being said or not said or *what* is being said or not said in a second language text may actually be more revealing of the second language culture than factual statements that deal with its achievements. Such reading requires a degree of self-reflective literacy which does not come automatically, neither in the first language nor in the second, but is eminently teachable, particularly within the second language learning environment.

The various suggestions presented here are intended to support just such a sophisticated second language reading pedagogy, even for beginning and intermediate learners. The potential rewards are great, since awareness of how to "read" texts for their

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cultural content empowers learners to become lifelong students of the other culture as well as their own. Indeed, it seems that many of the humanistic goals that we refer to in justifying second language learning in the academy depend on just such an approach to reading and to second language learning in general.

Reading for aesthetic pleasure: the incorporation of literature

Finally, the expanded scope of texts which characterizes the communicative second language classroom acknowledges as well the special place of literary texts. In fact, as Table 9 illustrates, the kind of awareness of intricate relationships between language form and meaning which was referred to in the previous section is an important basis for developing literary sensitivities.

Table 9 Literary Texts in the Classroom

Activities for Expressing and Interpreting Meaning

Whole group activities

Building a common background knowledge: Defining topic, genre, period, intended reader
Collecting necessary vocabulary
Assembling the facts
Brainstorming conceptual associations
Predicting topic development
Schema building

Small group/individual activities

Discovering key word indicative of a given meaning
Discovering parallels and contrasts in meaning
Finding illustrations of a given motif
Discovering regularities in content, sound, or form

Whole group activities

Exploring worlds of discourse
Brainstorming intentions and beliefs
Putting the data in order
Ranking and voting
Exploring alternatives and consequences
Interpretive role-playing
Exploring discourse forms
Structural parallels
Intratextual variations
Intertextual variations

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Criteria for the Selection of Texts

Our deliberations have not only assumed the use of authentic texts, they have strongly advocated their use, even for beginning learners. However, that advocacy is by no means open ended. It is simply not the case that texts, just because they are authentic, should thereby be assumed also to be pedagogically suitable, appropriate for all kinds of learners and, most importantly, advantageous for the development of second language reading abilities and, ultimately, communicative language use across all modalities.

Indeed, changes in second language reading pedagogy are likely to be successful to the extent that we also reconsider our criteria for the selection of texts. In the past, we have primarily chosen texts on the basis of perceived formal simplicity or complexity, or because we considered them "interesting" in usually difficult to define ways. We have come to understand that it is just as important to consider whether learners can be assumed to have appropriate background knowledge for accurate text comprehension, and that means, more often than not, the necessary literacy skills in order to be able to offset their limited second language knowledge.

As already indicated, there is ample research evidence that an "easy" text can actually be quite demanding of students when they have little background knowledge to aid them in encoding the text. By comparison, learners can often manage the challenges of a linguistically more complex text as long as they already have or can relatively easily develop the necessary background knowledge.

For beginning and intermediate second language readers, such background knowledge is likely to begin with familiarity with certain genres or topics or major themes in the lives of people, where their understanding is not heavily or exclusively tied to events or occurrences that are highly specific to a culture.

On the surface such a recommendation would appear to contradict both the culture specificity of a literary text and the intention that it should serve as an avenue for understanding difference and diversity. However, that is not the case. By consistently requiring students to confront the significance of links between meaning and language form, the approach to reading being recommended here aids students in uncovering the deep cultural moorings of any text, literary or otherwise. Underneath the surface of "sameness" of topic or genre, they will not find the simplistic sameness of the "global village syndrome," but a highly articulated and nuanced interplay between language and culture.

Tables 10 and 11 offer important criteria for the selection of texts beyond the importance of background knowledge. Points 3-7 deserve particular attention for beginning reading assignments; texts that are opaque in that regard cause unnecessary difficulties for the second language learner. Of course, that is not to say that they cannot and should not be read at some point; but it is to say that they are best introduced when learners have developed some degree of sure footing in approaching second language reading.

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Table 10 deals specifically with narrative texts, for the near-unique advantages they have for drawing out learners' background knowledge which, as we have said, translates into unique advantages for the beginning second language reader. In addition, Table 11 offers considerations for a larger range of texts. The listing does not constitute an instructional progression; instead all text types can and should be included at all instructional levels.

Table 10 Text Selection Criteria

Factors that make narrative texts more accessible:

1. Topics familiar to the students
2. Topics of interest to foreign language students
3. Substantive, readily discernible plot or message system
4. Clear sequential development
5. Well marked episodes (transitions between topics, actions, places, introduction of new characters)
6. A recognizable agent or concrete subject
7. A minimum amount of description
8. An unambiguous intent (satire or irony may confuse beginning readers)
9. An appropriate length of assignments for your class level (rough word count)

Be able to identify the following in the texts you select:

Percentage of unguessable words *not crucial* to inferring meaning _____ %
Percentage of unguessable words *crucial* to inferring meaning _____ %
Consider and exemplify the use of language in terms of abstractness (metaphors, symbols, hidden meanings, formulaic language)
Consider the construction of the text as:
- narrative
- problems and solutions
- contrasts
- issues and implications

Pinpoint major areas of difficulty you foresee for students:
- topic
- specifics of topic (where, when, who?)
- themes (why read this?)

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Table 11 The Range of Authentic Materials

Realia Signs, announcements, menus

Descriptors Highly visual and highly contextualized

Comprehension key Experience over language

Orientational texts Short instructions, directions, advice

Descriptors Informational, short; narrow context and focus
Simple, straightforward language with overt organization (e.g., multiple headers, bullets); often article-length in a newspaper or journal

Comprehension key Balance of language and experience

Narrative texts Non-literary or literary text that tells a story or relates an event

Descriptors

Non-literary: Describes, provides background, more expansive length, from longer article to short story or book.

Literary: In telling the story, the focus is on multiple meanings in order to explore the human condition. Presupposes knowledge of cultural and linguistic/literary norms against which the literary ambiguities and multiple connections can be played out in order to obtain the meaning and significance of the text.

Comprehension key

Non-literary: Work with story schema and episodic structures; set up matrices. *Adjust the task, **not** the text.*

Literary: Bring out awareness of the interrelationship between language and how it expresses meanings, and what meanings it expresses. Explore life experiences, worlds of discourse, of associations, alternatives, constant motifs, parallels and contrasts.

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Ascertaining Students' Reading Interests

Last but most surely not least, we must find ways to know our students, or this pedagogy, like any other, will not be successful! In line with the two major strands that come together to support effective second language reading—second language knowledge and background knowledge—we must get a well articulated sense of both aspects as they describe our students.

In terms of the kind of second language knowledge we generally attribute to our students, the biggest change is to consider the advantages of recognition or comprehension knowledge over production knowledge, a difference that is further heightened by learners' background knowledge.

That background knowledge is best ascertained at the beginning of instruction with interest surveys similar to the one included in Table 12. Their purpose is to assess students' interest in reading various types of literature, with regard to subject content, genre, biographical subject, author preferences, television viewing, career information, newspapers, and magazines.

After individual responses have been collected, a composite summary of all student responses will provide direction for planning teaching units and selecting literature for students.

Table 12 Interest Inventory

1. Listed below are some topics you can read about in books. Check the topics about which you would enjoy reading.

___ arts and crafts
___ religion
___ jobs
___ government
___ cooking
___ gardening
___ music and entertainment
___ detective stories
___ sports
___ comedy
___ mystery
___ westerns
___ love stories
___ aviation
___ hobbies
___ far away places
___ travel
___ fairy tales
___ adventure stories
___ history
___ science
___ health
___ animals
___ space
___ war
___ spy stories
___ other
_____

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Table 12 Interest Inventory (cont.)

2. Check below the kinds of writing which you enjoy reading.

___ long stories (novels)
___ short stories
___ poetry
___ plays
___ biographies
___ essays

3. List below persons' life stories you would be interested in reading.

4. List below authors whose books you enjoy reading.

5. Name three of your favorite television programs.

6. Name three careers (jobs) you might consider after you finish school.

7. Check any of the following newspaper sections you enjoy reading.

___ local news
___ national news
___ international news
___ sports
___ editorial
___ classified
___ comics
___ advertising
___ business
___ finance
___ entertainment
___ personal advice

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Table 12 Interest Inventory (cont.)

8. Information about magazines

Please list magazines to which you currently subscribe.

Please list magazines that you periodically buy at a newsstand.

Which additional ones would you enjoy reading?

9. Which books have you read recently that you would recommend?

10. Which of the following reasons for reading describe why you read most often?

___ to solve a problem (e.g., pass a test; build, fix, or cook something)
___ to feel that I am on top of what is going on around me and in the world
___ to learn new information
___ to find ideas/opinions that agree with my own
___ to enjoy literature that is beautifully written
___ to forget my problems for a while
___ for inspiration
___ to experience events/places that I have not experienced first-hand

Concluding Comments

This discussion of a comprehensive second language reading pedagogy will serve its purpose only when teachers take its recommendations into their classrooms. It was for that reason that much of the formation was presented in the form of tables. By way of further reducing and at the same time highlighting key decision-making criteria, the unit concludes with these recommendations:

1. **Reflect on the learners**, respecting their
   background knowledge and interests
   second language level and abilities
   long-term goals with regard to language study

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2. **Choose texts** in terms of their
   - topic familiarity and interest
   - clear, well marked, sequential development for ready discernment of plot
   - saliency of language forms (including text organization) with regard to whole text meaning
   - range of genre, from non-literary to literary
   - relationship of known and unknown language material as it affects and is affected by the purpose of the reading task

3. **Most importantly, determine the purpose of the reading assignment and create tasks accordingly.** Consider
   - the continuum of learning to read and reading to learn
   - the continuum from comprehension to production
   - the development of reading strategies that are more
     - meaning-based and more
     - form-based
   - the nature of the reader's response, in terms of
     - language (first language or second language) and
     - language modality (comprehension only, speaking, writing)
   - a balance between intensive and extensive reading
   - the possibilities and limitations of in-class and out-of-class reading
   - the use of reading in support of other instructional goals in the communicative classroom

4. **Finally, have the courage to make pedagogical choices and convey these to your students.**

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References and Suggested Additional Reading

Bernhardt, Elizabeth. (1991). *Reading Development in a Second Language*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

A comprehensive review of the research literature on the second language reading process as it arises from a synthesis of empirical data. Though the volume is not primarily methods- or classroom-oriented, it does set forth a number of well grounded principles to provide guidance for the second language instructor on such topics as controlled vs. authentic texts, readability, and expository and literary prose.

Galloway, Vicki. (1992). Toward a Cultural Reading of Authentic Texts. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Languages for a Multicultural World in Transition* (pp. 87-121). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co., Northeast Conference Reports.

An excellent discussion of the incorporation of texts at all levels of instruction to encourage cultural awareness. That goal of greater cultural awareness is seen as a process and a discovery procedure, not a product. Among the topics discussed are the challenge of authentic texts and their selection; the role of first and second languages; first and second cultures; the development of tasks for cross-cultural discovery arranged in four stages of "thinking," "looking," "learning," and "integrating." Many very practical pedagogical suggestions are included.

Grellet, Françoise. (1981). *Developing Reading Skills: A Practical Guide to Reading Comprehension Exercises*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Though by now augmented by other publications on reading and perhaps somewhat dated in its theoretical approach, this volume still constitutes a valuable, accessible entry into the field of second language reading.

Kramsch, Claire. (1985). Literary Texts in the Classroom: A Discourse Model. *The Modern Language Journal* 69(4): 356-366.

A highly useful article full of suggestions for working with literary texts in the beginning and intermediate classroom. The list in Table 9 is extracted from this article.

Phillips, June K. (1985). *Proficiency-Based Instruction in Reading: A Teacher Education Module*. Introductory Packet; Applications Packet; Sample Materials. Material produced in conjunction with a grant (#G008402271) from the International Research and Studies Program, U.S. Department of Education, June K. Phillips, Project Director.

Aside from elaborating in nontechnical language on the five-stage reading model, the three components of this grants project have the additional advantages of including something like a model workshop on reading and presenting pedagogical suggestions for sample texts in Mandarin Chinese, Beginning and Advanced ESL, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and Thai.

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Swaffar, Janet, Katherine Arens, and Heidi Byrnes. (1991). *Reading for Meaning: An Integrated Approach to Language Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall.

A treatment of second language reading that is based both in theories of language learning and reading as they have been developed in a number of disciplines (e.g., literary criticism, linguistics, psychology, anthropology) and in the praxis of the second language classroom. In focusing on reading as the construction of meaning on the part of students, its carefully sequenced pedagogy is intended to help foreign language learners practice mental and verbal reconstructions of the logical coherences of the reality that is presented in second language written texts as cultural artifacts, rather than the reality of their immediate physical environment. Within this overall thrust, the volume is noteworthy for its integration of language learning and meaningfulness (language and content) and of building up speaking capability through reading.

The Author

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